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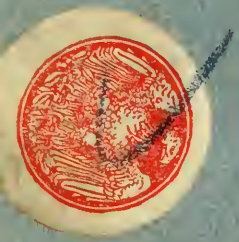
THE VOICE IN THE SILENCE



THOMAS S. JONES, JR

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THE VOICE IN THE SILENCE

BOOKS BY MR. JONES

The Voice in the Silence
The Rose-Jar
Interludes
From Quiet Valleys
The Path o' Dreams
(with Clinton Scollard)
From the Heart of the Hills

THE VOICE IN THE SILENCE BY THOMAS S. JONES, JR.

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TO

KATHERINE OSBORNE

The one whole song of this true poet touches the imagination in a way which may be best, yet far from perfectly, described by likening its effect to that of a single episode in a masterwork of a closely allied art — to a certain scene in *Tannhäuser*. The curtain rises on the stage, disclosing the edge of a beautiful forest. In full view is a solitary high rock around the base of which winds an ancient road — the road of human feet. On the rock sits a youthful shepherd and in the shepherd's hands is the pipe of his sylvan solacing art. Amid the forest's beauty, stillness, loneliness, first he sings — self-attentive to his wistful joy. Then he places the pipe to his uncompanioned lips and blows his song out upon the bright atmosphere — still retaining for himself the gayety of a consecrated surrender to its plaintive note. Soon he is disturbed and silenced by another sound — the slow heavily burdened chorus of a band of coming pilgrims. Their variously commingled voices draw nearer, grow louder. The sandaled wayfarers of the soul appear. They advance. Their chant rises with fullest volume as they surge round the rock. They pass on; they are seen no more; for a while their song lingers down the leafy glades; then it too dies out in the distance. Again is the unchanged

stillness of the forest, the unchanged loneliness of the road save for fresh imprints of care-worn feet. And yet once more the youthful shepherd will take up his pipe and blow upon the air his uninterrupted song. He will neither forget it nor will he change it. He will borrow for it no note from any particular band of pilgrims afterwards arriving, because it is his finished song of them before they arrive. It heralds their approach before they are heard; it continues their presence after they are gone. It is the one song of his life about all pilgrim bands who pass his way — along the same human road — around his woodland rock: the rock overlooking the road, the song blending the sounds of the road and the forest. Thus this poet's song: native to the woods from which it never wanders; intent upon a theme which it never relinquishes — the forest and the pilgrims. And thus while his pipe has no rift in it, his song has one — the never to be mended rift between nature and humanity.

JAMES LANE ALLEN

Thanks are due the Editors of *Harper's Magazine*, *Scribner's Magazine*, *The Book News Monthly*, *The Pathfinder*, *The Delineator*, *The Smart Set*, *The International*, *The Lyric Year*, *The Boston Transcript*, *The New York Sun*, and the other publications in which the poems of this collection originally appeared, for their kind permission to reprint.

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THE VOICE IN THE SILENCE

TO SONG

HERE shall remain all tears for lovely things
And here enshrined the longing of great hearts,
Caught on a lyre whence waking wonder starts,
To mount afar upon immortal wings;
Here shall be treasured tender wonderings,
The faintest whisper that the soul imparts,
All silent secrets and all gracious arts
Where nature murmurs of her hidden springs.

O magic of a song! here loveliness
May sleep unhindered of life's mortal toll,
And noble things stand towering o'er the tide;
Here mid the years, untouched by time or stress,
Shall sweep on every wind that stirs the soul
The music of a voice that never died!

IN EXCELSIS

SPRING!
And all our valleys turning into green,
Remembering —
As I remember! So my heart turns glad
For so much youth and joy — this to have had
When in my veins the tide of living fire
Was at its flow;
This to know,
When now the miracle of young desire
Burns on the hills, and spring's sweet choristers again
Chant from each tree and every bush aflame
Love's wondrous name;
This under youth's glad reign,
With all the valleys turning into green —
This to have heard and seen!

And Song!
Once to have known what every wakened bird
Has heard;
Once to have entered into that great harmony
Of love's creation, and to feel
The pulsing waves of wonder steal
Through all my being; once to be
In that same sea
Of wakened joy that stirs in every tree

And every bird; and then to sing —
To sing aloud the endless Song of Spring!

Waiting, I turn to Thee,
Expectant, humble, and on bended knee;
Youth's radiant fire
Only to burn at Thy unknown desire —
For this alone has Song been granted me.
Upon Thy altar burn me at Thy will;
All wonders fill
My cup, and it is Thine;
Life's precious wine
For this alone: for Thee.
Yet never can be paid
The debt long laid
Upon my heart, because my lips did press
In youth's glad Spring the Cup of Loveliness!

INTIMATIONS

SO life goes by, yet leaves this starry gold:
All things that once were wonderful and true,
Kin to the best and what may not grow old,
Sifted of dust, disclosed forever new.

Thus in the waste of swiftly passing years
These wondrous things are proof of what may be,
For even now beyond the gate of tears
They stand revealed in immortality.

A DEBT

TIME has been prodigal of fairy-gold
Which I have hoarded tenderly away,
Mayhap to squander in that later day
When Winter has come on and I am old;
But now the Spring has marvels manifold,
And youth still trembles in its sunlit sway,
So do I wonder how I shall repay
A debt for all the joy one heart can hold.

I wonder, and the answer comes full clear:
To keep a heart in joy, to sing again
When Winter has come on and life is bare;
For you do know the Spring is ever near,
And haply to some lonely soul in pain
You may pay back in largess unaware.

OF ONE WHO WALKS ALONE

THESE are the ways of one who walks alone,
Sweet silent ways that lead toward twilight skies,
Bees softly winging where a low wind sighs
Through the hills' hollow, cool and clover-blown.

These are the ways that call one back again
To old forgotten things in faded years,
Swift on a moment of remembered tears
They stand from out the dust where they have lain.

These are the ways life's simple secrets bless,
Keen homely scents borne by each haunted wind,—
Here in the silence one may ever find
That last strange peace whose name is loneliness.

IN MEMORY

THERE is one cloistered place that still would keep
A single dream should all the others go,
For ever it is just the same as though
It rested in God's loving hand asleep.

Its hills are steadfast and its trees are true,
And all its winds are like the winds of June;
And life is never old nor out of tune,
And youth is golden as the skies are blue.

O quiet vale asleep beneath God's smile!
I ever need you for the ways are far,
And through all things I seem to know you are
A little vision of the after-while.

THE GUARDIAN ANGEL

SOMETIMES a waking dream my life will be
Too wonderful for words or any song,
As if the moment time had burst its thong
And passed the verge of immortality;
Sometimes the fates do spin so lavishly
A web of rarest joy with threads so strong,
That then I know grief cannot last for long
Since endless beauty is unveiled to me.

What though one stand without the gates of gold,
Seeing beyond, time is a little thing,
And in the silence all things may abide;
For Memory her mighty wings will fold
About each dream with gentle winnowing,
And they are safe . . . and I am satisfied.

A SYMPHONY

TO-DAY, a symphony!
An ecstasy of sound, a rushing sea
Of tonal wonder through the trees!
Truly are these
The flutes Æolian,
And Pan
The piper of lost melodies!

Winds all day long,
Sweeping the branches on a thousand strings
Of myriad notes; and tremulous, the song
Of birds in haunting harmony!—
Floods of full sound, piercing and strong,
Yet laden with a tenderness that sings
Into the soul,—an undertone
Poignant as memory:
A sweetness blown
Across discordant years,
Caught from the rhythm of the chanting spheres!

It must be Pan, indeed!
For now the dusk unveils the evening-star,
And as a dream
The winds blend into one exquisite theme,—
Then faint afar
Like the low piping of a shepherd's reed.

THE PINES

IN lofty galleries of greenery
They rise and meet the azure of the sky,
A pillared nave whose arches frail and high
Breathe with an organ's solemn melody:
Now like the minor surging of the sea
Or low and faint as wings that startle by —
As sweet-tuned winds that quaveringly sigh
Adown dim aisles of cloistered pageantry.

While through the stretches of this lovely fane
The swaying censers shed a drowsy smell
Heavy with some rare fragrance from afar,
Upon the pavement falls the sunset stain,
The dusk creeps on . . . softly a twilight bell . . .
And now, the altar-candle of a star!

AS THROUGH A GLASS

A SOFT thin haze of misty golden-green
Lies on the valley, tenuous and frail,
Touches the far hills with its sunlit sheen,
And folds the distance in a filmy veil.

Is there naught else drifted between our eyes
And endless beauty that can never pale?—
Are these but vistas of some paradise
Seen through the meshes of a golden veil!

BEYOND

I WONDER if the tides of Spring
Will always bring me back again
Mute rapture at the simple thing
Of lilacs blowing in the rain.

If so, my heart will ever be
Above all fear, for I shall know
There is a greater mystery
Beyond the time when lilacs blow.

THE WAY BACK

NO more the road shall turn,
And sudden through the trees, the hills,
The gleam of water, and the winding road.
Never at sunset, the low lying clouds,
The scent of all the loveliness of Spring,
And then the moon and silence and your hand.

But I shall ever turn
Back on that road
In memory, and stand
With you at sunset, while the clouds
Lie golden on those well-loved hills . . .
So shall I ever come to you and Spring.

THE QUIET VALLEY

I

HERE only dreams will come the live-long day,
Dreams left behind, but here fulfilled at last;
For in this haven time is put away,
And, like the clouds, the freighted hours drift past.

Far, far away within the guarding hills
The changing beauty every moment fills,
Here, in the shelter, is the sweet release
Where life drains deeply from the cup of peace.

II

THE west is liquid in the tawny light,
The hills are billows of a purple sea,
Low in the east the shadows of the night
Creep up the sky in waves of mystery.

And now above the fading after-glow
The little moon hangs like a silver bow,
Till it too sinks behind the purple-bar,
Leaving the silence to the evening-star.

ON A FLY-LEAF OF "THE CHOIR INVISIBLE"

TO J. L. A.

FOREVER burns the glory of the Grail,
And still across the years its crimson stain
Shadows the heart of him who seeks in vain
A perfect service that may never fail;
And lest the sacred radiance should pale
It still is served by the unending train
"Of those immortal dead who live again"
And lend new wonder to a time-sweet tale.

So here anew is one who saw the gleam,
And followed blindly on the valiant quest,
Whose windings may seem ofttimes dark and sad;
Yet to our eyes he shows a clearer Dream,
And in his knighthood of divine unrest
Bears on his arm the shield of Galahad!

URBS BEATA

MAY it not be that we at last shall win
That Place long sought whose towers we both have seen?
Can we forget, who oft so near have been
That ever music sounds above life's din?
For now there beats a melody within
Each moment, and white visions intervene
Where earth's dull clouds unfurl their misty screen,
And where the paths are dark and choked with sin.

It lies so near that often in the dawn,
Or when the stars first show their silver fire,
We seem on old lost ways we once have trod:
Upon the grass a Light no more withdrawn,
Upon the wind a Song time cannot tire,
And in our hearts the very Voice of God.

TO ROSAMUND MARRIOTT WATSON

DIED DECEMBER, 1911

WIDE scattered rose-leaves on a dewy lawn,
The call of birds, the hush of gentle rain,
Low airs that whisper at the verge of dawn,
Music and twilight and the shadows' stain.

These fill your song, apart from noise and stress,
Sweet with the murmur of faint winds afar,
Steadfast in peace and nature's quietness,
Laden with beauty as frail roses are.

ENDYMION

NO elder hour may speak to you and me
While this sweet moment breathes oblivion,
For even now the west enfolds the sun
And all the valleys are a flaming sea . . .
A distant flash of wings unfurled and free
Toward one lone star where clouds their ravels run,
And through the drifting veil in silver spun
The summer moon's white face of mystery.

But with the moon, old dreams and old-world pain,
Borne on the winds of memory and time
That sweep away the fading twilight spell;
And in the pale glow something back again,
Something to wake the blood's swift pulsing rhyme,—
Immortal Youth amid the asphodel!

AT THE WHITE GATE

TO THE MEMORY OF MICHAEL FAIRLESS

IT is not far, the life of adoration,
For all about its many symbols lie:
Each dawn has known the mystic elevation,
And twilight burns pale tapers in the sky.

It is not far, but in each touch of wonder
That clothes the landscape in a filmy veil,
And in the winds and the deep voice of thunder,
And on the music of a summer gale.

Yet in the darkness of the silent places
Is the one door that guards the sacred shrine, —
Around the portal are the angel faces,
Within, the everlasting Bread and Wine.

EMBER-GLOW

TO ROY ROLFE GILSON

A SILVERED sky swept by the misting rain,
A maze of tree-tops tossing to and fro;
But here within, the fading ember-glow
Streaking the shadows with a golden stain.

Outside the storm, but here where discords cease
In warmth and silence and the fire-light's spell:
A sheltered space for simple faith to dwell,—
A little haven of eternal peace.

THE SILENCES

I

NOT in the stress of noon's unshadowed tide
But where the dusk is vague with memory,
Down lonely lanes where dreams mayhap abide
Or far adrift on some unfathomed sea.

There for the moment, we who knew the flame
Of one sad day beside life's heedless stream
May, through the stillness, almost hear the same
Soft falling waters on the shores of dream.

II

DID we but always know that this were best:
These silent trees that guard the sunset's rim,
These old gray hills that once meant only rest
Nor wavered when our memory grew dim.

Yet now no loveliness may speed in vain,
No waste of dawn in youth's fast fading year,
Sweet with the tenderness of twilight rain
And wistful with the songs we did not hear.

LILAC-TIME

III

SO still the lilacs hang, so ghostly white
In the soft washes of the cloud-swept moon,
And all the grass is gray with silver light
For Spring to say her last farewell to June.

Roses will riot now where all is gray,
And in the grasses boom the summer bees . . .
But I shall only see the lilacs sway
And seek their fragrance 'neath my empty trees.

IV

THESE paths are sweet with thought of April's green,
For time may never sweep life's drift away:
Each rain-blown leaf holds much of yesterday,
Each tree a testament to Spring unseen.

Lanes still the same in April-tide or now,
White with soft bloom or golden or stript bare,
Spring ever came to make their branches fair
Nor marked the shadow of an empty bough.

EBB-TIDE

V

THE far soft reaches of the purple hills,
The flame of gold and red, the haze swept sky,
The hush of simple hours the silence fills, —
These sad and lovely things as shore-drift lie.

Sweet wreckage of a swiftly ebbing year,
Hidden in flood-depths and undreamed before,
Yet now left lying and unladen here, —
Sea-drift and star-drift on a wind-washed shore.

VI

WHILE peace withholds the sands of waning day,
And ere the sunlight into dusk has grown,
Here may I too forget and steal away
By paths untrodden and on shores unknown.

And mid the shadows, in some wood of dream,
Drink from that cup untouched by joy or tears,
Cool with the waters of a twilit stream
Whose well-springs are the calm of all the years.

THE MOORS

ALL day the rain,
Gray on the misted hills
And on the poplar leaves, a silver veil
Torn in the wind; always the rustling sigh
Of leaves and wind that fills
The silence with a strain
Of lonely music; while the hours go by
Unheeded, and the light grows pale.

Strange quietness,—
Mayhap the symbol of a greater peace.
How little now the stress
Of yesterday;
Even the wished-for things, how far away!
Rest and undreamed release.

THE ROAD

THE long, long lane,
The straight and narrow road,
And these gray walls that never end. —
And yet a bird may sing and branches bend
In the soft hush of rain.

Gray walls and low-blown dust,
Yet overhead each Spring white boughs in bloom.
Heart, heart we must
Look skyward for the end is not in vain; —
Now empty gloom,
But then, mayhap, wide pastures after rain.

And even now
Along this lonely road
A bird calls bravely from a wind-swept bough.

CANDLE-LIGHT

AS in old days of mellow candle-light,
A little flame of gold beside the pane
Where icy branches blowing in the rain
Seem spectre fingers of a ghostly night;
Yet on the hearth the fire is warm and bright,
The homely kettle steams a soft refrain,
And to one's mind old things rush back again,
Sweet tender things still young in death's despite.

So, when the winter blasts across life's sea
Do beat about my door and shake the walls
Until the house must sink upon the sand,
Then on some magic wind of memory,
Borne swiftly to my heart a whisper falls, —
And on my arm the pressure of your hand!

FORGOTTEN

ALL day the branches are so softly stirred,
And ever comes a song the wind has made,
The sunlight mingles with the drowsy shade,
Deep in the wood a lonely thrush is heard.

Quiet and peace across the sleeping vale
That was forgot so many years ago;
Now through the pathways tall rank grasses grow,
Tossing unhindered in the gentle gale.

For they who used to walk these lovely ways
Long since departed nor will come again —
Never a footstep in the scented lane
That once had known such happy yesterdays.

And where the path was then so red with bloom
Only the creeping brier its tangle shows;
Save in the last still watches, one lone rose
Sends through the ghostly dusk a faint perfume.

And they who rest and long have found surcease
Upon the little hill girt round with trees,
Are silent through the seasons' mysteries,
Deep in the slumber of their simple peace.

Dear lonely place, you mean so much to me
For I have known as you the joy of Spring,
And somehow in your sweet remembering
You touch the very soul of memory.

WIDE PASTURES

IS there no way to reach beyond that wall,
  No voice to stir you from such slumbers deep?
Must always silence answer to a call
  That now would wake you out of endless sleep?

Here lie wide pastures swept by wind and rain
  Where ever you may walk unbound and free,
Here loveliness knows neither age nor stain,
  And words are sweet in their virginity.

Youth is so short, and only now the way
  Lies wide before you through the sunlit land,
There is no path that leads to yesterday —
  And if to-morrow you should understand.

Is there no way to reach beyond that wall,
Nor any voice to waken you from sleep?

AT THE ROAD'S END

THERE comes no fear of that dim silent night
When I shall sleep beyond the call of day,
When all shall cease and softly slip away
With the dark curtain drawn across my sight;
For in the instant I shall know aright
And that which was and is at last survey,
Clear as a crystal of the wide sea spray
And swept of clouds in one vast burning light.

No fear, and yet my heart was wont to care
For Spring and Summer and the maze of Fall,
And every wind that waveringly blew;
And though no doubt will come when I shall fare,
'T were hard to leave so much that held me thrall, —
And oh, the loneliness apart from you!

SAPPHICS

TO

CLINTON SCOLLARD

SING the song of youth in its golden season,
Youth, glad youth, more dear than the ages' treasure!
Still as then across the far fields of twilight
Your voice is singing.

Hushed with wonder e'en as the low sky's flaming,
Hushed in longing, fraught as the winds of twilight:
Youth, dear youth, so ever your sweet voice singing,
One with the wind's song.

What are years that go as a moment's fleeting,
Years forgot and lost in the dust of silence;
Still as then across the far fields of Lesbos
Your voice at even!

TO A GREEK STATUE

THROUGH the years you stand always gravely smiling,
Warmth of earth yet snow of a driftless beauty:
Youth and joy forever as one brief moment,
Waiting in silence.

And for us, the moment you stopped to listen,
Rapt before a Voice that should tell you all things;
So for us, an image of life unbroken,
Youth made immortal!

ONLY

SPRING will come and go in a maze of wonder,
Skies unfurled again to the lilac weather,
Burdened branches and always a light wind blowing
Just as it used to.

Only you, the secret to me of Springtime,
All its sweetness, all of its poignant beauty . . .
Only you may never come back, and only
I shall remember.

AT THE WINDS' CALL

THERE are winds that surge as the wash of waters,
Strong and full and deep as a storm at flood-time,
Winds that call until in my soul's far reaches
Wakens an answer:

Wild as winds or ever the waste sea's longing,
Wild and lonely, stirred from the depths of hunger.
Lonely winds, more vast are the empty spaces
Deep in my being.

When, at last, shall come the long-wearied silence —
Peace, gray peace, or merely the end of dreaming;
Yet the winds have called, and my heart's old longing
Cries through the darkness!

TO A HILL-TOWN

THIS to you across the swift years that gather,
This to give for ways that were filled with gladness,
Ways hill-girt and under the Spring's first sunrise —
Paths that were golden.

Here they lie in memory's early keeping,
Wind-swept hills dim-misted with purple vapor —
One lone hill and three lonely pine-trees tossing
Black on the sky-line.

For these most — yet dusk on the lake's still edges,
Dusk and moonlight sweeping a wash of silver,
Chime of bells and softly an organ's throbbing . . .
Music and moonlight.

And for them, long gone from the hills of morning,
Song and laughter, voices that faintly echo . . .
All to you, who made as a dream of beauty
Youth's little Springtime!

ELEGY

HERE shall rest unmoved through the waning seasons
One who knew and dreamed, and forgot in dreaming;
Now alone the trees, who remembered always,
Are his companions.

They to whom he came for their silent healing,
They who ever gave of their ancient patience;
Now alone with them and the night-wind's crooning
Leave him forgotten.

THE GIFTS OF PEACE

ALL day long the wind in the bending branches
Softly croons a chant for the silent sleepers,
Through the hours the birds in unceasing rapture
Echo the wind-song.

Tossing branches caught by the spars of sun-glow,
Framing bits of blue with their leafy meshes,
And upon the winds from the pine-tree's censer
Attars unloosened.

Far away the valley lies in a day-dream,
Warm and golden, swept by the clouds' swift shadows,
While the grasses like distant ocean billows
Drift in the sunshine.

Here is peace and loveliness ever mingled :
Organ music of winds and birds and branches,
And a brooding Presence that makes each moment
A benediction.

IF at the end you still should stand in Spring
With perfect youth above the surging years,
Still in your eyes unfaded wondering,
Still in your heart the essence of all tears;

Then might it seem that life had stripped away
From its hid semblance the last fleeting veil,
And I should know the dream of youth's decay
As one who looks upon the Holy Grail.

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